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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [OSCE](#) [PHUM](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: MFA WALKS BACK THREAT OF BUDGET CUT FOR ODIHR

REF: MOSCOW 2146

Classified By: Acting DCM Alice G. Wells; reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: While reiterating its frequent complaint that the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has performed poorly, on July 26 the Russian MFA walked back the assertion by the Deputy Chair of the Central Election Commission (CEC) of an imminent budget cut by Russia in ODIHR funding. The MFA statement noted the hope that ODIHR's new Director will return it to its mission of lending assistance (when requested) for strengthening and developing democracy among the member states. End Summary.

12. (C) The Russian MFA appears to have distanced itself from the July 24 statement by CEC Deputy Chair Igor Borisov that the GOR might discontinue its funding of ODIHR's election observation efforts if the OSCE rejects Russia's proposals for election observers (reftel). MFA European Council section chief Tatyana Sulitskaya told us July 28 that the response posted on the MFA's official website on July 27 (see paragraph 3) was the official position of the MFA. In its response to a question from the media, the MFA clarified that ODIHR's budget is an integral part of the total OSCE budget, which was unanimously adopted by the OSCE's participating member-states. The MFA statement bluntly criticized ODIHR's election observation efforts and called for consistent rules for how ODIHR undertakes election monitoring, but noted the GOR's hope that the situation will improve under the new ODIHR Director, Ambassador Janez Lenarcic from Slovenia.

13. (U) Official translation of Russian MFA entry on ODIHR financing:

Response by the Russian MFA Information and Press Department to a Media Question About Russia's Approaches to the Activities of OSCE ODIHR

Question: Does Russia consider the possibility of financing the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)?

Answer: The ODIHR budget is an integral part of the OSCE budget, unanimously adopted by the participating states of the OSCE. In determining its stand on this issue, Russia, like all other states which are part of the OSCE, proceeds from its own vision of the priorities in its activity and of the usefulness of its specific executive structures (including ODIHR) for tackling national development tasks and strengthening pan-European cooperation.

As to ODIHR, it has to be said bluntly: in recent years it has poorly coped with the tasks laid upon it. The previous leadership of the Office got carried away with the ideology of self-proclaimed "autonomy," and used to take decisions in a mode of secretiveness towards the OSCE member states, which all together are by definition the masters in this organization. The activities of ODIHR, especially in the

field of election observation, were distinguished by double standards and began to work for disunity. Essentially, ODIHR continued to arbitrarily divide OSCE members into "good" and "not very good," which only served to split the OSCE and led to the appearance in its space of new dividing lines. In this sense, ODIHR was in fact working against the basic philosophy of the OSCE, for which, strictly speaking this organization had been set up.

We hope that the recently appointed new Director of OSCE ODIHR, Janez Lenarcic (Slovenia), will succeed in returning the Office's work to the original vocation of this OSCE structure -- to lend assistance to member states upon their requests, inter alia in fostering cooperation among them in the important job of strengthening and developing democracy across the Euro-Atlantic space.

A key mainstay for the Office and a guarantee for its effectiveness, in our opinion, would be the adoption by the governing intergovernmental bodies of the OSCE of clear-cut rules for its activities, primarily in the area of electoral monitoring. He who resists this actually contributes to the further weakening of trust towards ODIHR and to the devaluation of its role.

July 26, 2008

End official translation of Russian MFA entry on ODIHR financing.

Comment:

14. (C) The MFA's statement sets out its position for a more restricted role for future ODIHR election observation efforts consistent with its behavior during Russia's two most recent national elections, both in which ODIHR eventually decided not to participate.

RUBIN